

LABOUR MONTHLY

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Editor : R. Palme Dutt

New Battle of France

R.P.D. reviews what happened, the true causes
and next steps



Britain's Shipyards Today

Dan McGarvey, President of the United Society of
Boilermakers, continues the trade union series

Other Articles include

**'I TOO AM FROM
KERALA'**

by D. N. Pritt, Q.C.

**THE DOCTORS'
DILEMMA**

Ruscoe Clarke on the
ten years' record

**LONDON, THE
BATTLEFIELD**

by J. A. Mahon and
D. Goodwin

**GERMANS AGAINST
ATOMIC DEATH**

Otto Baumann describes
what they are doing

JULY • 1958

ONE SHILLING AND SIXPENCE

NOT BY GENERALS

WARNING the 'working-men of England' of their masters' hatred against freedom and progress, William Morris wrote eighty years ago: 'These men cannot speak of your order, of its aims, of its leaders without a sneer or an insult: these men if they had the power (may England perish rather) would thwart your just aspirations, would silence you, would deliver you bound hand and foot forever to irresponsible capital'. Every time you hear *Wealth crying Havock! within* like this, you know that history is in the making. In the 20th century it is made by busmen, dockers, engineers and miners—not by generals, who can no more make history than run a bus. One such time was the spring of 1921, when Black Friday saw the breakdown of the Triple Alliance of railwaymen and transport workers with the miners. Yet only four years later it was to prove magnificently successful, on July 31, 1925 — Red Friday — when the government of hard-faced employers retreated in confusion before the loyalty of transport workers, railwaymen and miners. Thereupon the most crafty ruling class in the world spent a year trying all they knew to weaken and divide, in preparation for the General Strike. Meanwhile a not unimportant part of the efforts to prepare on the workers' side was the famous trade union series of articles 'Towards a New Policy', in *LABOUR MONTHLY*, then in its fourth year, in which virtually every leader of note took part. (A contributor in our present important trade union series was one.) In January, 1926, there appeared what is to my mind the

most powerful and devastating exposure ever penned of British 'Class Justice'. This was the title of the Notes written whilst the present editor was under arrest in the *Prison de Forest* in Belgium, and the present associate editor was serving a prison sentence in Wandsworth. No armchair criticism here! Then came the famous General Strike Number, in June, 1926, with historic inside accounts of how the Workers' Councils of Action of the Durham-Northumberland area worked; what happened at Chopwell and Gateshead during those ten days when the workers had power in Britain. If the British workers had learnt the lesson taught then, the whole course of history could have been changed. What appears in 1958 will be remembered, too, in days to come.

If I dwell here on the past it is because one of the penalties of great age—and 37 is a fabulous age nowadays for any journal, let alone one of the left—is that the young do not share your memory. To young miners, engineers and railwaymen, Black Friday sounds further away than Peterloo seemed when our fathers were young. They do not know what part L.M. has played in the industrial struggles of four decades. They ask: Who founded it? Why is it called 'Labour'? What is a journal of 'labour unity'? Answering very briefly: L.M. was founded in July, 1921, just after Black Friday. Associated in it were R. Palme Dutt—still editor—and R. Page Arnot, the miners' historian—still associate editor. In fact, it is a magazine which has not changed sides in its 37 years. It has had no cause to do so, having complete confidence in the working class. It aimed at helping to build unity, to hammer out, and carry out, a *class policy* which alone can take the

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NOTES OF THE MONTH

The New Battle of France

THE battle of France is not over. It is only beginning. De Gaulle, to adopt his own words of eighteen years ago—when he fought the men of Vichy instead of leading them—has won a battle. He has not yet won the war.

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It is only eighteen years since the French Army chiefs last betrayed France. They opened the front to Hitler. Their motto was: 'Rather Hitler than Communism'. That was also the motto of the French Right, traitorous as ever through their fear and hatred of the French working class and people. The craven leaders of the parliamentary majority (including at that time the majority of Socialist deputies), having banned and excluded the Communist Party, and imposed the death penalty for Communism, surrendered to fascism and voted the special powers to Pétain. For four years fascism with foreign backing ruled France.

In those days De Gaulle united with the French Communists, with the patriots and the Resistance, against the traitorous Army chiefs, against Hitler, Pétain and the men of Vichy.

Today De Gaulle has become the Leader and Hero of the men of Vichy, of the new

brand of seditious army chiefs, of the plotters of fascism and glorifiers of the Gestapo. Behind his war-time honours they seek to cover their infamies. De Gaulle was the centre piece of the new plot of fascism. Where a direct fascist-military coup could have hoped for no effective or durable success in face of the overwhelming resistance of the democratic Republican majority of the French people, the role of De Gaulle provided the bridgehead for the offensive. De Gaulle could be presented as the 'respectable' and 'independent' Arbiter to whom the craven leaders of the parliamentary majority, demoralised by the threats of a military coup, and once again fearing unity of the working class and the left more than they feared fascism, could turn as the Saviour to whom to surrender personal power. Thus parliamentary democracy was destroyed from within.

Facing the Facts

De Gaulle has won his extraordinary powers. Nothing is to be gained by minimising the gravity and urgency of this situation. This represents the most serious offensive against democracy in Western Europe since the war. It carries incalculable international consequences. The offensive affects all countries. The unsuccessful try-out of counter-revolution against the Hungarian People's Democracy in Eastern Europe two years ago is now enlarged into an offensive against democracy in a major West European country.

Paper Safeguards

The 'constitutional legality' of the investiture is a shameful fiction, covering a reality of open insurrection, threats of violence and cowardly capitulation by those whose duty it was to lead the defence of democracy. The 'limitations' and 'safeguards' written into the grant of extraordinary powers are in themselves mere paper guarantees, unless backed and made effective by the strength of the people. The executive, the legislative and the constitution-drafting power has in fact been concentrated in the hands of one man. During these six months of absolute personal power, all the conditions could be created for the full offensive of fascism to be carried through, unless the united resistance of the people is mobilised in time. Under cover of the 'Committees of Public Safety' the machinery of fascism is being organised.

History Never Repeats Itself

But the last word has not been spoken. The fortress has been surrendered without a battle by those leaders of the parliamentary

majority who preferred surrender to unity. But for this very reason the main strength of the French working class and the overwhelming democratic Republican majority of the people has still to come into action. United resistance has to be built up anew. The French people have shown their ability to build up such resistance before. 1958 is not 1940. It is not 1922 or 1933 or 1936. Nor is it 1851. It is a new world situation, in which the strength of the working class and socialism, of democracy and national liberation, is enormously greater and advancing over the world. Grave ordeals lie before the French people. They are of urgent concern to us all. But we can be confident that the real France, the France of the Great Revolution, of 1848 and the Commune, of the Resistance, the France which has consistently since the war given its first confidence to the Communist Party as the first party of the nation, will assuredly vanquish the new offensive of fascism.

1. How Did it Happen?

How was it possible for democracy in France to be thus destroyed? There was an overwhelming majority for the parliamentary democratic Republic, not only in the electorate and among the people, but equally in the parliament. Up to the last moment there was an overwhelming majority against De Gaulle, not only in the country, but also in the sovereign parliament. Fascism could find no foothold among the masses of the French people. This was a cardinal difference from the period of the advancing Fascists in Italy or the Nazi Party's gigantic minority votes preceding Hitler's being placed in power in Germany. De Gaulle's attempted 'Rally' was a flop and collapsed. The Poujadists were an ugly nuisance, not a menace. Twelve days before De Gaulle came to power the sovereign parliament voted nearly five to one (475 to 100) unlimited emergency powers to the constitutional government to defend the Republic against De Gaulle, fascism and the military rebels. Five days before De Gaulle came to power, the Socialist Party in parliament, which held the key to the parliamentary majority, together with its Executive voted 112 to 3 that 'we will not rally under any circumstances to the candidature of De Gaulle'. Four days before De Gaulle came to power, the mass Republican demonstration of half a million in the streets of Paris (the Fascists and Gaullists could only rally a medley of motor cars of the gilded youth hooting their klaxons in the luxury West End quarter as their 'mass demonstration') expressed the will of the people, their desire for unity and their readiness to respond to a united call for action.

Why?

Yet within a twinkling of an eye the whole fabric of parliamentary democratic constitutionalism collapsed. A servile parliamentary majority was voting absolute powers to De Gaulle. The principal leaders of the parliamentary majority and constitutional government, the principal leaders of the non-communist democratic parties and of social democracy, who had been given emergency powers to defend the democratic Republic, who had sworn their eternal allegiance to parliamentary democracy, who had castigated and denounced and banned and excluded the Communists, representing the majority of the working class, for their alleged lack of loyalty to parliamentary democracy—precisely these leaders and super-rhetoricians of the superior virtues of parliamentary democracy rushed in with their own hands to destroy parliamentary democracy, to invest De Gaulle with absolute personal power, and to accept positions as junior lieutenants at the court of the new dictator. These were the heroes of the present Socialist International, the chosen partners of the British Labour Party, the extolled models of ‘true democracy’ held up as its only trustworthy champions against the ‘Communist menace’ to democracy, and even now, after their open betrayal, defended and excused by Mr. Gaitskell in his speech of June 3.

Think

Why? How? This is not an event at the other end of the world. It is happening within a few miles of us, in the land closest to us, separated only by a few miles of water, in one of the two main countries which were the principal representatives of ‘West European democracy’ (alongside Neo-Nazi West Germany and Franco Spain), in the party with the closest ties to the British Labour Party. How does it come about that this entire fabric of parliamentary democracy, this supposed sovereign panacea and bulwark, once it is separated from class realities and its necessary basis in the strength and unity of the working class at the head of the forces of the people, once it is turned into an abstract theory and dogma in the name of which to divide the working class, can in an instant be destroyed and transformed into an instrument of tyranny against democracy and against the working class? This is the supreme question of our time which every democrat and every socialist, who may have been gulled by the easy phrases of ‘democratic socialism’ and its supposed contrast to the so-called ‘totalitarian’ theories of communism, must now face. It is above

all the question which every member of the British Labour movement must now ponder. We cannot go to sleep with the easy delusion (famous last words) that 'it can't happen here'.

Not Again

Of course we have had it all before with the Weimar Republic and German Social Democracy. German Social Democracy directed its fire against the Communists and working class unity, refused the united front, voted the special powers to Brüning, installed Field Marshal Hindenburg to become Chancellor as the supposed 'lesser evil' defence against Hitler, and then, when Hindenburg had placed Hitler (with a dwindling electoral minority vote) in power, and Hitler had banned the Communist Party and unleashed his terror elections, voted for Hitler in the Reichstag in May, 1933—only to find they had sharpened the knife to be turned in the end against their own throats. But the younger generation knows nothing of this, and of the true record of social democracy. The capitalist and Labour press does nothing to teach them. They are fed with lies: even the lie that Hitler came 'constitutionally' to power by the will of the majority of the German electorate.

Learning by Experience

No doubt in a few years, when the heat of the present events is forgotten—since at present even the Conservative press is compelled to treat with contempt the myth of De Gaulle's 'constitutional' accession to power and dismiss it, in the words of the *Observer*, as a 'greasy fiction'—the same scribes will be writing how De Gaulle came to power 'constitutionally' by the will of the majority of the elected representatives of the French people. The rotting corpse of social democracy has been dressed anew in the sweet trappings of 'Democratic Socialism' to gull the young and innocent, because the old name stank. But it is still the same old social democracy. Each new generation has to learn the lesson anew by harsh experience. It is urgent that the lesson shall this time be learned in time, before catastrophe goes further. Above all, the rank and file of the social democratic parties need to learn the lesson and draw the conclusions, as they are already fast doing in France, and as the membership of the British Labour movement will equally need to do. The path of Anti-communism leads to Fascism. That maxim should be written in letters a foot high in the council chambers of Transport House and Congress House.

Democracy and the Constitution

Was there something at fault, some lack of democracy, in the democratic constitution of the Fourth Republic that it should thus prove vulnerable to the first assault and collapse within twelve years of its foundation? On the contrary. The complaints most commonly voiced against it in British comment, the complaints of ministerial instability supposedly arising from the multiplicity of parties, are in reality a complete distortion of the true facts, as we shall have occasion to see. But in any case these amount to complaints that the constitution was too democratic: that the representation reflected popular opinion, and that the elected representatives controlled and dismissed Ministries, in contrast to the British system, where the electoral system is devised to distort the reflection of popular opinion, and the Cabinet in practice controls parliament in place of parliament controlling the Cabinet. Indeed in Britain, with the notorious elasticity of the British unwritten Constitution, it would be much easier, in given conditions of crisis, to carry through the entire transformation without any new legislation, through the judicious application of the Emergency Powers Act, the disinterment of a few forgotten laws from the time of Edward II, and a stricter interpretation of the existing law of criminal libel and sedition making it a crime to incite division between different classes of Her Majesty's subjects or foment disaffection against Her Majesty's Government.

Ironclad Guarantees

After the experience of Vichy Fascism, the 1946 Constitution of the Fourth Republic contained every ironclad provision that the wit of the drafters could devise to prevent a repetition. It was an even more perfect model of the complete parliamentary democratic Republic than the old Weimar Republic, which had been celebrated in its day as 'the freest democratic Republic in history'. The Constitution—mindful of the experience of the voting of the special powers to Pétain—even contained a clause expressly prohibiting the right of the Assembly to vote executive powers to one man. Yet this is exactly what happened. Why? What went wrong? Where was the flaw in this theoretically perfect parliamentary democracy? Let us examine first the various theories and explanations most commonly offered as excuses in order to reveal their inadequacy and reach beyond them to the truth.

First Theory : Constitutional Weaknesses

The favourite theory of British ruling class and 'expert' press opinion—of course faithfully echoed by Mr. Gaitskell and various other Labour Party leaders—is that the Constitution of the Fourth Republic was fatally weak because it had failed to imitate the Anglo-American two-party system. A democratic electoral system which genuinely mirrors public opinion by proportional representation inevitably results, these critics argue, in a multiplicity of parties. (In fact the French electoral system was only partially proportional, and was successively gerrymandered at each election during recent years in order to diminish the Communist representation below its share of votes.) Hence Ministries can only be formed on an unstable coalition basis; and the shocking habit of the French Assembly in regarding Ministries as their servant to be dismissed when failing to give satisfaction has resulted in the notorious succession of short-lived Ministries and chronic periods of vacuum and ministerial crises which have weakened France and discredited the system.

A Theory Exploded by Facts

The theory is interesting for the characteristic anti-democratic bias it reveals. It is fallacious in principle, since plenty of examples can be given of countries with proportional representation and stable coalition governments. But it breaks down completely in its application to France, because it ignores the central glaring fact of the French political situation which was the cause of the chronic ministerial crises. With remarkable consistency the French electorate at every election since the war has returned a left majority, with the Communist Party in the first place, the Socialist Party running close, and sufficient other left elements to provide the basis for a stable left parliamentary majority and government on an agreed common programme. This in fact worked with remarkable effectiveness in the period immediately following the war, when the basis of French reconstruction was laid. It was only the American intervention in 1947, compelling the exclusion of the Communist Ministers, and the surrender of the Socialist and other left Ministers with this American pressure, which destroyed the working of the parliamentary democratic system. The fiction was created that the largest parliamentary party, representing the majority of the working class, did not exist, thus in effect disfranchising over one-quarter of the electorate. It was for this reason alone that it was artificially made impossible to scrape together a parliamentary majority except

through temporary and unprincipled coalitions with concessions and surrenders to the right minority. Thus it was not the democratic system which produced the crisis. It was the denial of democracy which produced the crisis and opened the gates to the offensive of fascism.

Second Theory : Breach of the Constitution

The second theory lays the blame, not on the Constitution of the Fourth Republic, but on the breach of the Constitution, specifically by President Coty whose sworn allegiance was to defend and uphold it. President Coty took on himself, by the procedure of his extraordinary Presidential Message to the Assembly on May 29 to nominate personally De Gaulle as President of the Council, in place of fulfilling his constitutional function to accept the nomination arising from the consultation of the parties. The Presidential message added the ultimatum that if his nomination were not accepted he would resign. Undoubtedly this was flagrant extra-constitutional procedure to force the acceptance of De Gaulle on the parliament, and it was met with the defiant singing of the Marseillaise by all the left benches. The *Daily Herald's* correspondent in Paris, Michael Foot, obviously in some difficulty to expose the role of the Socialist leaders in the columns of that journal, and unable to cover the fact of the fidelity of the Communist Party to the democratic republic save by a passing sneer at their refusal to start an isolated armed insurrection ('its arteries have been hardened', 'down on its knees begging to join with others in political action'), found a triumphant solution by pointing a dramatic finger of accusation at President Coty as the Guilty Man. 'All the perfumes of Arabia', declared this master rhetorician as the conclusion of his message, 'will not sweeten the name of Coty.' For this fearless outspoken exposure he was duly expelled from France.

Not Enough

But really. President Coty as the Grand Wrecker of French Democracy? Everybody knew who and what President Coty was. In vain, knowing the universal suspicion with which he was regarded, he had always insisted that he was no relative of the notorious Coty family, the perfume millionaire monopoly which had been among the principal financial backers of fascism before the war. But everyone knew that Coty had voted the special powers for Pétain in 1940 to install the Vichy régime of fascism. Everyone knew that he was a man of Vichy, who should never have been allowed to continue in French politics. But to endow this pigmy

in a ceremonial function with such powers of a superman to destroy French democracy? Undoubtedly he played a very active part in the plot. Undoubtedly he violated the Constitution in the interests of the plot. But why did the Assembly surrender to his ultimatum? Why did the majority of the elected representatives surrender? Why did the principal leaders of the non-communist democratic parties surrender? That, and not the rôle of Coty, is the essential question.

Third Theory : Military Force

The third theory attributes the destruction of French democracy to the military insurrection in Algiers and Corsica, the fascisation of the police, and the consequent impotence and inevitable surrender of the constitutional parliamentary government before the threat of a military coup and civil war. 'Civil War or De Gaulle' (*The Times*, May 30, 1958). 'The choice is between the General and civil war' (*Daily Telegraph*, May 30, 1958). Similarly the *Daily Herald* correspondent, Michael Foot, wrote in its issue of May 28 to explain the failure of Moch, the Socialist Minister of the Interior, to act against the rebels:

The real cause of the weakened resolve of the Pflimlin Government has been the growing proof that the Army and sections of the police would not obey orders.

If any man could have restored authority over the police it was Jules Moch, the Socialist Minister of the Interior. But he found that his instruments were breaking in his hands.

A revealing sidelight from the Labour Party organ on the practical testing of the social democratic theory of parliamentary democracy and implicit trust in the neutrality of the machinery of the state. It may be recalled that the *Daily Herald* on May 19 had welcomed the appointment of Moch as 'a man of ruthless action' whose claim to fame was to have been 'the hammer' against the Communists when he was Minister of the Interior in 1947 and 1948. Under Moch the purging of left wing sympathisers was begun in the police, the fruits of which he was to experience in this crisis. Moch subsequently voted for the special powers for De Gaulle.

Army and People

This characteristic social democratic theory of the omnipotence of ruling class armed power to conquer democracy, and of the impotence of the masses, when it comes to the test, is a damning exposure of their real attitude behind their talk of 'pure democracy', in the name of which they have the impudence to lecture the communists for emphasising the class realities behind constitutional forms. But it will not do as the explanation of their surrender

without a battle on June 1. The military insurrection in Algiers and the threats of a coup in France played a very important part in the plot. But that part was not that of a direct insurrectionary seizure of power, which the organisers knew could not be carried through and sustained in face of the overwhelming opposition which would have arisen from the entire French nation. The role was rather to demoralise and intimidate the parliamentary majority into surrender without a battle, and to provide them with an excuse for that surrender. It was easy for the Army chiefs in possession of Algeria as a conquered country with half a million troops to announce their triumphant military seizure of Algeria. But they were financially and economically dependent on France. As soon as the coup in Algeria did not result in the fall of Pflimlin in Paris, but in his emergency powers to deal with them, they all began to climb down; and only the permitted political role of De Gaulle and the abject cowardice and inaction of the Paris Government before treason gave them the courage to lift up their heads again and raise their demands.

Showdown?

What could they count on? Salan might cry 'The Army to Power'. What army? Certainly they could count on their selected highly paid 20,000 'paras', trained for terrorism, and their 30,000 of the Foreign Legion, three-quarters German or ex-Nazi. Could they hope to conquer France with these forces against the resistance of the entire nation? Could they speak for the remaining 900,000 of the French armed forces, mostly conscripts from working class families and backgrounds? Would these so readily fire on their fellow workers to help fascism to destroy democracy? The whole tactics of the plot was to avoid such a confrontation. Therefore the method was the method of successive threats: Algiers, Ajaccio, the naval moves. Was the alternative 'inevitable civil war'? Even at the last hour when the limited and all too late move to mobilise the people in the mass republican demonstration on May 29 was made, the strength revealed was such as to lead De Gaulle to make at the last moment the most cautious manoeuvres and show of concessions, such as infuriated his fascist supporters. The defeat was not the consequence of the supposed inevitable impotence of the working class and the majority of the people before the threat of military treason. The defeat arose only through the deliberate refusal to mobilise the strength of the masses to defend democracy. That refusal was dictated, as every declaration of its sponsors made

clear, not by the fear that it would lead to the defeat of the people, but by the fear that it would lead to the victory of the people, the victory of socialist-communist unity, of the working class, of the left—all that presented itself to these leaders as the spectre more feared and hated than fascism. Therefore they surrendered to De Gaulle.

Fourth Theory : Betrayal by Individual Leaders

So we come to the fourth theory, which is compelled to recognise that the decisive role in the collapse of democracy in France was played by the leadership of the parliamentary majority, by the leadership of the non-communist democratic parties, specifically by such men as Pffimlin and Mollet, who headed the legal democratic government, who were armed with full emergency powers to deal with treason, and who instead surrendered and went over to the enemy. Here we come closer to the facts. Pffimlin, Mollet and their associates had an overwhelming parliamentary majority behind them. They had full emergency powers to defend democracy and deal with the traitors. They refused even to denounce the traitors. They cringed and crawled before the Right and threatened the Left. They immobilised the people. Finally, after another overwhelming parliamentary majority, they resigned to hand over to De Gaulle and slunk off to take posts in his Cabinet. So far the record of betrayal is sufficiently clear and sufficiently damning.

More Than Individuals

But is it enough to explain the defeat of French democracy through the betrayal by a handful of individuals? Is the sum total of political wisdom and final conclusion to be drawn that Citizen So and So is not to be trusted in future? Mollet, let us suppose (even this is not yet certain), is to be removed from his leadership of the French Socialist Party, and the old Social Democracy is to go on as merrily as ever? When MacDonald, Snowden and Thomas, the leaders of the Labour Party, wrecked the Labour Government and joined the Tories in 1931, the official Labour Party version still recognises no lesson. The official Labour Party version only notes that its three principal leaders 'happened' to go over to the enemy. For fifteen years the Communist Party had warned precisely against these three leaders as the principal representatives of the class enemy in the labour movement. No lesson was drawn by the Labour Party from this confirmation of the Communist warnings. Hence their successors are able to continue the same theories and the same policies unchecked.

Men and Systems

It may be an extreme habit of Communist Parties to make such a fetish of self-criticism that they ruthlessly tear to pieces each preceding phase of their existence in order to dig out and expose to the whole world the mistakes and learn the lessons. But it is at least more laudable than the other extreme. The Labour Party has never in its life admitted a mistake. No prominent Labour Party leader has ever found himself in the wrong. Therefore the old game is able to go on; and all the permanent protests of the left, or bitter experiences of 1931 or 1951 never lead to a serious attempt to draw the lessons and reach conclusions. Were Pflimlin and Mollet such giants they could wreck French democracy? These puny figures were the mere agents and expression of a political system which could only produce such results. They were the expression of a political system of betrayal of democracy, which did not begin in May, 1958, but developed continuously over eleven years since 1947.

2. Eleven Years of Betrayal

The war against fascism taught hard lessons of unity to all socialists, democrats and communists. Disunity had opened the gates to fascism. Now they were learning unity the hard way. The French Socialists had seen their leaders vote the death penalty against Communists and then vote the powers to Pétain and fascism. Now the socialist rank and file fought shoulder to shoulder with the Communists, with Radical Democrats, Christian Democrats, patriots against the common enemy, against fascism and the French traitors who supported it. Socialists, Communists, democrats uniting in the Resistance, in daily peril of death, vowed that they would maintain their unity after the war. This was happening all over Europe. In Germany the Social Democrats and Communists in the underground swore that they would learn the lesson and build a single working class party based on Marxism. These hopes and vows could only reach fulfilment in Eastern Europe. Where Anglo-American power extended, the road was barred. In West Germany Mr. Bevin and the Americans declared illegal the attempt of Social Democrats and Communists to merge in a single Socialist Unity Party and by administrative edict compelled the separate existence of Social Democratic and Communist Parties—the division of the working class as the essential foundation for capitalist rule. In France, where there was no direct administration

by the Anglo-American occupying forces, the path was longer and more complex.

Short Sunrise—till 1947

In France after the liberation the parties who had fought in comradeship in the Resistance went forward together to build the new France. Together they drew up the new democratic constitution. In the elections they won an overwhelming majority of the left and formed a strong coalition Government. The Communists—they who had been falsely dubbed 'traitors' by the real fascist traitors—had borne the main brunt in the Resistance. Indeed, their party had become known as the '*parti des fusillés*', the party of the 75,000 executed by Nazism. Thenceforth the French people in every election have given their first confidence to the Communist Party as the first party of the nation. By right of their premier electoral position the Communist Party could have claimed the premiership in the consequent coalition. They showed their deep and sincere understanding of democratic co-operation by not claiming this right and serving loyally under a Socialist Premier. During this first period a great initial work of reconstruction was accomplished; measures of nationalisation were carried through; and a system of social security established with levels in many respects considerably above the British levels. Then came 1947.

Betrayal of 1947

De Gaulle had already made his first offensive in 1946, against the first draft of the democratic constitution, and demanding a more authoritarian régime. He had failed and withdrawn. Where De Gaulle had failed in 1946, the United States took over in 1947. The United States had already been engaged in breaking down the post-war socialist-communist governmental co-operation in a series of West European countries (as subsequently they were to try in Czechoslovakia in 1948, and to meet with a resounding rebuff from the united working class). France in 1947 represented the crux of the problem for American imperialism in Western Europe. Britain under Bevin and Attlee was already a completely docile pensioner; and West Germany was being rapidly built up under the old bosses with the aid of American capital. The strategy of the offensive was the Marshall Plan, with Bevin as the principal go-between and salesman. A dazzling supply of limitless dollars was dangled before the eyes of the French Government, grappling with the problems of the post-war and Nazi-ravaged French economy—on one immediate condition, that they excluded the Communists

from the Government (the condition of aid to any Government, subsequently written in formally by Congress). There were other conditions in plenty, but less immediately obvious, and gradually unfolding themselves, to involve all kinds of economic and financial control and checking and integration, with West Germany, and the proliferation of a horde of American Commissions and agencies in Paris and all over France. But the immediate requirement was the exclusion of the Communist Ministers. The Socialist and Catholic Ministers succumbed. The Socialist Ministers apologised to their Communist colleagues for being compelled to drive them out, but explained that it was a question of dollars. Democracy in France was sold for dollars.

Betrayal of Democracy

Thus the betrayal of democracy in France did not begin in 1958. It began in 1947. The democratic will of the electorate was repudiated for the sake of dollars. One-fourth of the electorate was in effect disfranchised from its right to participate in the formation of policy. But the electorate remained obstinately faithful to the Communist Party as the first party of their choice, and to the return of a left majority, with Communists and Socialists predominating. Had the will of the electorate been carried out, there would have been no problem of instability of governments in France. There would rather have been a remarkably stable continuity of progressive governments. But since on American instigation the myth had been created that the largest party in parliament did not exist, it was then discovered that it was impossible to scrape together any stable majority and that temporary bargains could only be made by extending concessions to the right minority, rejected by the electorate. From this followed the ignominious succession of weak and short-lived Ministries and prolonged ministerial crises characteristic of these eleven years of shame. On this basis the further myth was created of the supposed inherent 'instability' of French politics (the stability of voting of the French electorate is in marked contrast to the wild swings of the British electoral system), and the consequent alleged 'unworkable' character of the French democratic system.

Fascisation of the Police and Armed Forces

The betrayal of democracy extended to every sphere. To meet the discontent of the working class, thus disfranchised, the police were strengthened and reorganised, with additional special bodies for violent action, and with exclusion of all suspected of left wing

sympathies. Thus the police became a more and more openly fascist force, as the police demonstration with directly fascist anti-parliamentary slogans on February 13 this year revealed. A similar process was conducted in the army, with purging of left wing officers and increasing fascist infiltration, especially under the right-wing Minister of Defence, Chaban Delmas, who assigned Delbecque to the staff in Algeria to organise 'psychological warfare', *i.e.*, to prepare the apparatus for the insurrection. Thus the fascist infiltration of the police and armed forces was conducted under the auspices of the anti-communist Ministries of this period, with the harvest revealed this year.

Betrayal of France

This betrayal of democracy within France was accompanied by the betrayal of France and the degradation of its role in international politics. The independence of France was surrendered by these weak, servile and unrepresentative Ministries to United States overlordship in return for dollars, with increasing American economic intervention and military occupation. Thus these 'democratic' Ministries became associated in the popular mind with servility to the hated American occupation. More. The policy of West European economic and military 'integration', fostered by American policy, meant in fact the increasing subordination of France to the dominant partner, the Neo-Nazism of West Germany with the restoration of the Krupps and Ruhr magnates and of Hitler's generals. The new enslavement was symbolised by the enthronement of Hitler's General Speidel in command of the European Army of Nato, including French armed forces, at the American-controlled Nato headquarters at Fontainebleau. This ugly reminder of Nazi military occupation, which infuriated all French patriotic feeling, once again appeared as the guilt of the 'democratic' Ministries and provided easy material for the corroding work of fascist propaganda.

Colonial Madness

France was not inevitably doomed to weakness in this period, had a different policy been pursued. On the basis of the policy of the progressive pre-1947 phase, with the Franco-Soviet Treaty of 1946, France could have turned from a bankrupt imperialist past to play an independent, leading and progressive role in Europe and international politics, checking the rebirth of Nazism and militarism in West Germany (in vain the Chamber tried to block

Nazi rearmament by rejection of the European Defence Community, but the general policy of surrender frustrated this will of the people), co-operating with the advancing democratic, progressive and socialist forces of Europe, and building a bridge across the divisions of the cold war. Instead the servile pensioners of American imperialism, tied to the cold war, sought to assert the 'greatness' of France by reckless and ruinous colonial wars. The war in Indo-China for seven years cost a million pounds a day and ended in the defeat of Dien Bien Phu. The 'Socialist' Mollet united with the Tory Macmillan and the 'Socialist' Ben Gurion to launch the disastrous Suez aggression against Egypt. The war against the Algerian people, with half a million troops, has now rebounded against French democracy. Once again the 'heroes of Africa', as Marx called them, the Cavaignacs, Changarniers and other generals who conducted the conquest of Algeria over a century ago and then massacred the Paris workers in the 'June days' of 1848, are reproduced in their successors, who from their base in Algeria conduct their war against democracy in France. 'The nation which enslaves other nations forges its own chains'. Never has it been so powerfully demonstrated that the active support for the battle of national liberation is no subsidiary philanthropic concern of the working class in the metropolitan country, but the vital interest for their own preservation and future.

Financial Bankruptcy

This senseless policy of megalomaniac aggression, servile dependence on subsidies, and betrayal of the vital interests and needs of France, not only discredited the régime, but landed French finances in an increasingly desperate situation. It is true that French industrial production has been booming in the recent period (an increase of 11 per cent. in April of this year over a year ago, alongside British stagnation and the American decline). Profits have soared. But this boom has been built up in an abnormal situation of reckless war expenditure threatening the state finances with bankruptcy, increasing dependence on renewed dollar loans, and desperate worsening of the conditions of the people. The Washington loan of \$655 million obtained at the beginning of this year (extorted with the threat that the alternative would be a Popular Front) is already beginning to run down; and the deficit on the balance of payments is running at the rate of \$480 million a year. Between 1956 and 1958 food prices in France have increased from 30 to 35 per cent., while the consumption of meat

per head has fallen by 15 per cent. The desperation of the people and dissatisfaction with the existing régime was growing. It was expressed in a consistent rise of the Communist vote in all the by-elections and local elections this year, and in the advancing demand for peace in Algeria and a new Government of all progressive democratic forces. These were the conditions and this was the moment when the combined offensive of all the fascist, militarist and right wing forces against parliamentary democracy was launched.

Military Coup and Inside Plot

The offensive did not begin with the Algiers coup of May 13. It was already manifest with the fascist demonstration of the Paris police outside the Chamber on February 13. Already in March the French Communist Party Central Committee resolution called for the 'union of all left wing forces to bar the road to Fascism'. Only when the Socialist Party had failed to respond to that call, the militarist and fascist forces in Algiers struck. They had hoped by their coup to compel the downfall of the Government in Paris. When the Communist Party rallied the parliament (which was continuing its debate as if nothing had happened) to meet at once in emergency session and place emergency powers in the hands of the legal democratic Government to quell the rebellion, the plotters drew back; even Massu declared that he had been 'coerced' into joining the 'Committee of Public Safety'. But as soon as it became clear that the Government would not use its powers, would not even condemn the rebels, saw always the enemy on the left, and refused to mobilise the people, the assailants plucked up confidence anew. Even so the military threats were only the accompaniment of the 'legal front' of De Gaulle to break down the parliamentary majority. The key role had to be played by the 'inside men', Pflimlin, Mollet and their friends, who acted, not as a Government, but as accomplices and under-cover agents of De Gaulle to disrupt the parliamentary majority from within.

Communists, Socialists, and Democratic Unity

In this situation the decisive factor to turn the balance, alike in the parliament and for the basic issue of mass united action, became the role of the Socialist Party. The original vote of 112 to 3 against De Gaulle 'under any circumstances' on May 27 had been undermined by the manoeuvre of the Auriol letter offering conditional support. Even so the majority of deputies remained against (54

to 40); the Executive was also against (23 to 18); and only the addition of the senators succeeded in obtaining, not a majority for De Gaulle, but a free vote for Mollet and his associates by the narrow majority of 77 to 74. In the event, the majority of the Socialist deputies, or 49, voted with the Communists against De Gaulle, as against 42 for. Had the normal practice of the majority decision of the parliamentary group governed the whole vote, this would have automatically brought down De Gaulle's majority to 21; and the influence of this on the radicals and other groups, alongside the courageous stand of such spokesmen as Mendès-France and Mitterand, would have in practice reversed the vote and ensured a democratic majority. In that sense the Socialist vote was decisive in putting in De Gaulle. But this time the majority were against, in contrast to the majority for Pétain. The personal dictatorship of De Gaulle has now been established. The fascist forces are in full cry to push forward the offensive. But the basis plainly exists for communist, socialist and democratic unity of the people to defeat the fascist offensive. The battle has opened.

3. Some Conclusions

The present stage of the crisis in France is transitional. The personal dictatorship of De Gaulle was established with no initial declaration of programme. All the contradictions of the situation in France continue and are exacerbated by the new events. All the contradictions of the situation in Algeria are inflamed. The bankruptcy of colonialism and interminable colonial war cannot be banished by the mock phrases of 'integration' to cover the denial of national independence. During the week of De Gaulle's visit to Algeria 591 Algerians were killed by the French army of occupation—no doubt as a symbol of the 'new fraternity'. The menace of extending conflict reaches to Tunis and Morocco. 'My only regret', declared General Massu in a revealing interview after the coup, 'is that we did not immediately march to Cairo'. Fascism and war are always inseparably interlinked.

Fascism on the Warpath

The initial partial success of the military fascist offensive, through the surrender of the parliamentary majority and the installation of the dictatorship of De Gaulle, has only inflamed and enlarged the

appetite for more. All the fascist forces, based on Algeria and actively operating in France, are in full cry to demand the complete destruction of all democratic institutions and political parties. Their 'Committees of Public Safety' (the shameful caricature distortion, habitual with fascism, of sacred revolutionary traditions) are the machinery devised to organise a fascist 'mass' movement—the counterpart of the 'Society of December' or the Falange or Storm Troopers. There has already been no lack of police terror in the streets to mark the inauguration. The military fascists in Algeria, with openly proclaimed Gestapo models, have already shown their capacities for the methods of assassination and torture. In this situation, despite all the formal guarantees accepted by De Gaulle at his inauguration for the protection of civil rights and of the sovereignty of parliament, the conditions of personal power and rule by decree, with parliament adjourned, open out the road to carry through decisive further changes in the whole political structure long before any question arises of the old parliament ever meeting again.

Battle for Democracy

Hence the battle is grave and critical. Nothing could be more fatal than the attitude of passivity which seeks to justify the surrender by the 'consolation' that the worst has not yet happened; to substitute for popular unity and action faith in De Gaulle as the 'lesser evil'; and to look to paper guarantees for the protection of constitutional rights. In this storm the strength of the opposing forces decides. The present unstable situation is not and cannot be static. It can only move in one or the other direction. The fact that De Gaulle is in power does not mean that a straight and automatic road to fascism has already been opened. In every move and gesture so far De Gaulle has had to take uneasy account of the strength of the popular democratic forces. He has to take into account the realities of the international situation and the critical economic, financial and international position of France. Only the further development of the struggle will determine the outcome. There is no doubt that, if united action of the popular democratic forces can be achieved, all the conditions exist for their decisive victory in the final outcome.

British Labour and French Democracy

This critical battle calls for the most urgent solidarity of the entire British labour movement with French democracy. On the

very eve of the surrender the *Daily Herald* on May 30, in a memorable editorial, acclaimed:

those Socialists and other brave democrats who have refused to be intimidated, who have refused to sign their names to a seizure of power. Their courage is the one sign of hope in France. . . . Those who refuse to bow to the threat of force represent the true spirit of Frenchmen. They ward shame from the name of France.

In this way the organ of the Labour Party in fact, whatever the intentions, in the hour of testing paid tribute to the French Communist Party as the only political party which, together with brave individual socialists and other democrats, represented 'the true spirit of Frenchmen' and 'the one sign of hope in France'. But by June 1 *Reynolds News* was already climbing down, and, while lamenting that 'it is tragic that the French Socialists appear to have failed at the testing time', was back at the old stand of the familiar Social Democratic formula of the parallel fight against 'Right and Left totalitarianism'—the well-tried formula for dividing the working class and letting in fascism. By June 3 the Leader of the Labour Party, Mr. Gaitskell, was publicly defending Mollet as 'equally devoted to democracy' with those who opposed. The Labour Party officially remained silent through the crisis. Such blindness to the menace at our doors could be fatal. The British labour movement could only at its peril fail to learn the lesson of France or to stand foursquare by the French working class and people in the present battle which is now the front line of battle of the entire working class in Western Europe.

Retrospect and Prospect

When this journal was founded, Mussolini had not yet come to power. We have seen and lived through it all. We have seen Brailsford's *New Leader* describe Mussolini's Corporate State as a kind of Guild Socialism, and proclaim that 'Labour must meet Fascism half way'. We have seen the *Daily Herald* after Hitler's accession to power describe Nazism as a variant form of 'Socialism'. We have seen the price of anti-communism and refusal of the united front paid with the lives of millions exterminated in the gas-chambers and tens of millions killed on the battlefields of the second world war. But we have also seen the strength and victory of the united battle of the peoples against fascism, the downfall of the dictators, the new birth and extension of socialism and national liberation over widening areas of the world. And then during the last few years we have had to see once again for a time the resurrection in certain quarters of all the old discredited slogans of division

and anti-communist hysteria. All unconscious of the lessons of the past, a new brood of young innocents has ardently echoed the imprecations of their lords and masters, the heirs and successors of the revived anti-Comintern Axis, when the latest attempt of the hydra of fascism to raise its head anew in the first country of its birth in Europe was this time utterly and decisively smashed. Within two years, with the echoes of these imprecations still ringing in the air, fascism has struck in France. Must it be always so? Must the owl of Minerva only fly after the light of day has passed into the darkness of night? Must the peoples of the declining and now socially conservative corner of the world in Western Europe and North America learn only on their skins? Let us hope that in spite of all, the peoples of the dying Western social order will still show in the further outcome that they have the strength of life—to learn from the past, to see what is, and to act in time.

June 12, 1958.

R.P.D.

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'I TOO AM FROM KERALA'

D. N. PRITT, Q.C.

WILD tumbling hills of great beauty, their tops wreathed in mist in spite of the hot Southern sun. Elephants, a few bison, an occasional tiger, many monkeys, live there; and human beings too.

Tea plantations straggle their gay green bushes up and up the slopes; under the control of foreign planters, the plantation workers pluck the leaves. They own nothing but their strong arms—and, fortunately, something of a trade union. There is, of course, a government, 150 miles away, 5,000 feet below.

Little peasants, too, as poor as the plantation workers, have little patches of cultivation, and perhaps a few chickens. And a few thousand 'tribals' (aboriginals) try to keep a foothold.

Remote? Yes, in a way. Backward? Yes, in a way. Ignorant? Well, there are many things that we know, many things that the people in the capital below know, of which these folk have not heard; but what poor man who stands up and survives is really ignorant? Unimportant? No, no, nobody is unimportant.

But there seems to be something unusual afoot. What is it? A by-election! Should the remote, the backward, the ignorant, be interested? Or cynical? Well, they are interested; very interested. Here is a plantation worker who knows little or nothing of the legislative problems that are agitating his fellow-citizens in the capital, or of the challenges to the legislation which make their way to the Courts; but he says: 'Yes, I shall vote for this government. Before it came, the police used to fire on us; now, they are not allowed to do so; this government won't let them'. A peasant says: 'Yes, I shall vote for this government. Formerly the forest guards and the police used to harass me with complaints that I had damaged this or that, and threaten proceedings. And I had to kill off a couple of chickens that I could ill spare, to give them a feast, and buy off the prosecution. This government has stopped that, and I can get my own eggs and eat my own chickens'. And a 'tribal' says: 'Yes, I too shall vote for this government. It works hard for the special interests of the tribals.'

So, up and down the hills, they came and voted. Almost all the other parties had formed a combined opposition to defeat the

government candidate, but the government candidate won by many thousands.

I write of it because it was quite an important by-election. Three and a half hundred million people in the country watched it; indeed, most of the world watched it. It was a by-election in a State where the government that had been ruling for nearly fourteen months with a tiny majority in the legislature, and looking after the interests of these people and thirteen million others as well and as honestly as it could, was a government of the Communist Party. The by-election was to tell that government and the world around whether its people approved it or not. And the answer was, emphatically: 'Yes, the people are behind you. Go ahead and do your best for this poor and beautiful corner of our big country.'

Yes, this was Kerala, in May, 1958. Yes, it is a great victory. And when I telephoned in the evening of the counting to a big Press agency in Bombay to see if the result was yet through, I could not even formulate the first words of my enquiry before the telephonist said: 'The Communists have won, by thousands', and rang off to deal with the next enquiry. I went back to my table, and the waiter said quietly: 'Would you tell me the result? You see, I too am from Kerala.'

LABOUR MONTHLY

TWENTY-FIVE YEARS AGO

LESSONS OF FASCISM

The German events are a terrific warning to the British workers who are now facing a growing capitalist offensive against hours, wages and conditions, threats of higher prices and currency inflation, a sharpening of the war danger as the imperialistic antagonisms intensify and the conclusion of the Four Power Pact raises a new menace against the Soviet Union. The proceedings of the World Economic Conference demonstrate that the capitalist crisis is deeper than ever and the position of the working class more perilous. . . . The need of the hour is the building of the united front.

From *Towards a United Revolutionary Party*,
by William Rust, July, 1933.

To the Mothers of the Dead Militia

PABLO NERUDA

They have not died!
they stand upright in the midst of the gunpowder,
they live, burning as brands there.

In the copper-coloured prairie
their pure shadows have come together
like a curtain of armoured wind,
a barrier colour of fury
like that same invisible breast of sky.

Mothers, they are standing amidst the corn
as tall as the profundity of noon
that possesses the giant plains.

They are a peal of sombre voices
calling for victory through the shapes of murdered steel.

Sisters as close as
the dust fallen,
hearts that have been broken
keep faith in your dead—
they are not roots only
beneath stones dyed in blood,
not only poor fallen bones
at work now in the finality of earth,
for their mouths are shaping the dry powder ready for action,
they attack in waves of iron,
in their clenched fists lies deaths' own contradiction.

See, from so many bodies an invincible life arises!
mothers, sons, banners,
in one single being as living as life;
one face made of all the slain eyes is guard in the darkness
with a sword that is strengthened and tempered with human hope.

Cast aside your mourning veils, join all of your tears
 till they transmute into metal—
 so that we may strike day and night,
 so that we may hammer day and night,
 so that we may spit forth day and night,
 till the portals of hatred be overthrown.

I have not forgotten your tragedies
 and your sons, they are known to me,
 and if I have pride in their deaths
 in their lives, too, I have pride.
 Their smiles
 are like flashes in the murk of the workshops,
 and in the underground
 every day their feet ring by mine.
 I have seen
 amongst the oranges of Levante
 and the fishing-nets of the south,
 in the ink of the printshops
 and the masonry of the buildings,
 I have seen
 the flame of their hearts fashioned out of fire and valour.

And, as in your hearts, mothers,
 in mine there is so much of death and mourning
 that it seems like a forest flooded
 with the blood that quenched their smiles;
 to it come the furious snows of sleeplessness,
 the wrenching solitude of the days.

But, beyond your curse on the hyenas
 out of Africa, blood-parched, baying their foul cries,
 beyond wrath and contempt, beyond tears,
 Oh mothers, transpierced by anguish and death,
 look into the heart of the new day that is dawning
 and know that your dead smile up at you from the earth,
 raising their clenched fists above the corn, there, look, they are
standing.

We publish this poem to mark the twentieth anniversary of the climax of Civil War in Spain, and to commemorate all who fought and died that democracy might be saved and peace preserved.

A DISCUSSION CONFERENCE on Britain and the Colonies

*to be held Sunday, OCTOBER 26, 1958,
at Denison House, Vauxhall Bridge Road
London, S.W.1. (10-30 a.m.—5 p.m.)*

Sponsors include: Percy Belcher; Cedric Belfrage; John Berger; J. G. Crowther; Rev. Stanley Evans; Arthur Horner; the Very Rev. Hewlett Johnson, M.A., B.Sc., D.D.; S. Leff, M.D., D.P.H.; Joan Maynard, J.P.; Alderman J. H. Nicholson; Harold Poole; D. N. Pritt, Q.C.; Councillor E. A. Roberts; Archibald Robertson; Gordon Schaffer.

Questions for this Forum include:

1. What should be Labour's attitude regarding the colonies on (a) democratic rights; (b) armed forces and war bases; (c) economic aid and British capital investments?
2. Can the British people prosper without colonies?
3. Are declining prices of raw material products in the colonies related to unemployment in Britain?
4. How can British trade unions best help the colonial trade unions?
5. How can labour help to solve colonial workers' problems in Britain?

Delegate's fee 2s.6d. Visitor's ticket 2s. All enquiries to Conference Manager, 134, Ballards Lane, London, N.3.

BRITAIN'S SHIPYARDS TODAY

Dan McGarvey*

THE shipbuilding industry is one of the most important basic industries in the United Kingdom. The very fact that this great country of ours is an island is of the utmost importance to our way of life: we must keep abreast with the times in modern development of the shipbuilding industry.

The United Society of Boilermakers take second place to no one in the pride and craft of shipbuilders. As the predominant union in the industry it is natural that we come in for some criticism from certain sections of the press and from some of the die-hard employers, who should know better.

The vast majority of our members in shipbuilding are employed on piece-work price lists. This tends to keep them producing at a very high tempo. Again, working conditions in the majority of shipyards have changed very little over the past twenty-five years. Price lists at present being worked were first agreed in many cases over fifty years ago. From time to time adjustments have been made with a percentage increase added as a plus or minus on the original figure. It would shock a great many people if they could see the mathematical calculation necessary before our member can say: 'That is what I have earned'. The time is long overdue when these heirlooms should be dispensed with. Foremost to go should be the item known as *Facilities Deduction*: our members have to pay the employers as high as 35 per cent. of wages for the use of the employer's equipment. This ironically enough, is pocketed by the employer: our member can never at any time own the equipment he is blackmailed into using to do the employer's job for him. One may ask: if that is the case why do you stand for it? Of course the answer is not as simple as that. I am quite sure the employers would be the first people to say we do not meekly accept everything they ask us to do. Regarding this legitimate grievance around the necks of our members, which could be interpreted to mean that our members are subsidising the industry, we are entitled to have a square deal at an early date.

The Boilermakers' Society was founded on August 20, 1834. Next year it will be 125 years old. As a craft union when we talk

*Mr. McGarvey, as many of our readers will know, is President of the United Society of Boilermakers, Shipbuilders and Structural Workers.

about 'our industry' we know what we are talking about. The profits made in the shipbuilding industry in the post-war years are to say the least extortionate: it would be true to say that if the Labour Government had nationalised the industry in 1948 and paid very generous compensation to the owners, the industry would now belong to the nation with all charges on it paid in full. In point of fact old Shylock of *The Merchant of Venice* must be turning in his grave at being born before his time; or could it be, if there is anything in this re-incarnation business, that he multiplied himself a hundred-fold, as shipbuilding employers?

There is a saying in our Society: 'If you meet a good shipbuilding employer, shoot him before he turns bad'. This, of course, is an old saying but I am sorry to say it is as applicable today to the majority as it was in the past. There are too few employers with a modern outlook on industrial relations.

It has often been stated that our union opposes the introduction of new equipment into the industry. This is the parrot cry of the armchair critics. We welcome new equipment, but we make one condition, and rightly so: that we must be consulted by the management and a suitable price arranged for the job, before the new equipment is put into operation. With all its difficulties this has worked on the whole quite amicably; and I would make bold to say that it is the commonsense approach of our members to the industry's problems which has been mainly responsible for Britain still retaining her world-wide reputation as shipbuilders.

There are, of course, certain items we are prepared to fight to attain.

As to wages, it was in the light of the economic considerations that the Executive Council of our Society decided recently to urge the Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions to submit claims for substantial increases immediately. We were encouraged to find that we were not the only union making such a suggestion, and the Executive Council of the Confederation have since decided to submit claims.

We have a very strong case. First, we can point out the need, in the overall economic interests of the country, to maintain the purchasing power of the workers to meet the threat of a new recession. It is utterly wrong that in present circumstances wages should be held at a standstill when there has been a rise in prices since the last wage increases were conceded. This is a sure formula

for a growth in unemployment. Secondly, the profits of the employers in most sections of the metal-working industries have continued to rise. In engineering, for example, according to the *Financial Times*, the trading profits of companies whose accounts were published in the first four months of this year rose by 5 per cent. in comparison with the previous year. The amount distributed as dividends rose by 12 per cent. Then, in electrical goods manufacture profits rose by 13 per cent. and the amount distributed by 14 per cent. In shipbuilding there was a slight decline in trading profits from the record high level of a year ago. Trading profits were 5 per cent. less. On the other hand, it is significant to note that the amount distributed as dividends rose by no less than 27 per cent.

Our members have contributed to these additional profits of the employers. It must not be forgotten that they represent increases on already very high levels. We say emphatically that so long as the profits of the employers go up, so too must the wages of the workers. We will never accept a situation in which the profits of the employers are rising whilst the workers are suffering a real cut in living standards. All wealth is produced ultimately by labour, and the wages of the workers are the first claim on any industry.

Thanks to this Tory Government and its capitalist policy, we begin to see shipping laid up. Whilst there may be room for more than one opinion as to how serious a danger signal this is at present, on one point there can be no doubt whatever: neither the Government nor the shipbuilding employers themselves have the slightest chance of using the gloomy forecasts successfully as a Red Herring, to put the workers off fighting for more wages. We know very well that they are intended to pre-condition the workers in the shipbuilding industry to a blunt refusal by the employers to our just wage claim, on the deliberate lie that the industry cannot afford an increase. But the facts in our possession are such that a substantial increase can be conceded. I hope the employers will not give way to political pressure on this issue, but judge our case on its merits. If this course is followed, I have no doubt the industry will benefit as a consequence.

Our claim for holiday payments based on average earnings was recently rejected by the employers. Subsequently we took the claim to the Industrial Disputes Tribunal. Then it was shown that the holidays with pay agreement in shipbuilding is one of the least favourable in any major British industry. It does not provide the

workers with anything like their average earnings. We were able to point out that workers in nearly every other occupation have more favourable holidays with pay provisions. The Tribunal did not find in favour of our full claim; but they added the observation that they were impressed with the extent of the disparity in shipbuilding between average earnings and the amount the worker receives for holidays. They suggested that the employers and the unions should do something to lessen this disparity.

During the past twelve months the Confederation have again pressed our claim for a forty-hour week. The claim is now for a five-day, 40-hour week without loss of pay, by progressive stages over an agreed period.

It is one of the most urgent and pressing claims that we have had for many years. Since the last reduction in hours there has been a substantial increase in productivity in shipbuilding and ship repairing. This ought to be reflected in improved conditions of labour. All previous experience lends support to the contention that a reduction in the basic week does not alter the long-term trend of rising productivity. We feel confident that with the introduction of the 40-hour week productivity in our industry would continue to rise.

In the last two decades there have been major changes in the technique of ship construction and we are insistent that the benefits that have accrued from these technical changes should be properly shared with the workers in the industry.

The 40-hour week has for long been the aim of progressive world opinion. Twenty-three years ago the International Labour Organisation, representing governments, employers and workers throughout the world, adopted its Forty Hour Week Convention. This Convention urged that a continuous effort should be made to reduce hours of work in all forms of employment, and it approved the principle of the 40-hour week.

In recent years the Boilermakers' Society, through its contacts in the international trade union movement, has done much to encourage trade unions in other parts of the world to fight for shorter hours. We say emphatically that we are not prepared now to stand aside and see Britain fall behind other countries. In fighting for shorter hours trade unionists of all countries speak the same language. We cannot accept a position where the rest of the world is moving forward and Britain is standing still.

One of the problems which constantly faces our Society is that of protecting the health, welfare and safety of our members. The

new techniques which have been developed in shipbuilding work have brought new hazards to the workers. Our Society has, therefore, made representations to the appropriate Government departments to obtain better protection for the workers. Last year I was also able to suggest at the Metal Trades Committee of the International Labour Organisation that the I.L.O. itself should prepare a report on international regulations for the protection of the safety, welfare and health of workers in shipbuilding and ship-repairing. The interest of our Society in this matter is a very clear example of the close concern of trade unionism with legislation affecting working people.

I have dealt mainly with the domestic problems of the shipbuilding industry and one would now be entitled to ask: 'What about the future prospects of the industry?'

The position as I see it is still very good whatever temporary setbacks may occur from time to time.

Since the end of the war it has been possible to forecast shipbuilding requirements fairly confidently, because the replacement of post-war losses was a basic need in every sphere of maritime activity; particularly in respect of specialised ships such as cargo liners, passenger ships and tankers, which could in no way be permanently catered for by the war-built Liberty and standard ships. The spectacular advance in power and energy requirements has assured a positive overall advance in shipping, particularly for tankers, and dry cargo tramps and bulk carriers of coal and ore. The position of liners is also very good; and the facts show that after 1958 there will be a strong revival in this section for a number of years.

This present comfortable position in the shipbuilding industry is not being accepted by the workers that it will always be so. Rather is it being accepted that it is the skill and craftsmanship of the workers in the industry, which is respected by the customer, and as such it is a challenge to all concerned to continue to produce the finest ships that sail the seas.

LONDON, THE BATTLEFIELD

John Mahon and Dennis Goodwin

A MONTH of industrial conflict confirms the presentation of major questions of strike strategy which, as readers will recall, was made in the *Notes of the Month* of the June issue of this magazine. An expression of determination and unity, unmatched in the last three decades of working class history has taken place. The London busmen's strike of May-June, 1958, will remain as an outstanding event in British trade union history.

At the time of writing (June 11) 53,000 busmen are in the sixth week of official strike action, while another 27,000 transport workers are on unofficial strike without strike pay. These last include 1,700 Smithfield meat lorry drivers in the ninth week, 5,000 market workers in the fifth week and 20,000 dockers who, honouring their tradition that black goods should not be handled, have come to the support of the market workers and brought the Port of London to a standstill.

The Tory Government and the employers have chosen to take on well-organised militant transport workers in the capital city to make a demonstration to the whole country of their determination to put an end to nominal wage increases, to lower real wages and to weaken the trade union movement.

As the weeks have gone by so the unity and determination of the strikers has grown. Increasing threats from the employers, rebuffs from the General Council of the Trades Union Congress, indecision in their own union leaderships, ceaseless press, radio and television propaganda, hardship growing from week to week—all these have not shaken the workers. Divisions expected by Sir John Elliot who, on May 4, talked about 'keeping the garages open for all who wished to work', or by the Port employers who calculated that through so-called 'permanency' they had created a docile splitting force among the dockers did not materialise. This solidarity is the answer to those who lack confidence in the willingness of today's working class to struggle.

The determination of the strikers has been matched by the obstinacy of the employers and the Government. The bus strike could have been avoided at a cost of £6,000 per week more than the Foster award: the loss in London Transport revenue already is equal to 250 times that amount. Market and Port employers have also dug their heels in. The intensity of the struggle cannot

be explained solely by the amount of money involved. As the strikes have developed so has the understanding that the outcome will decide whether the future is to be one of higher wages and improved working conditions forced out of the employers by struggle, or lower earnings, greater exploitation, greater intensity of work imposed on the workers by the employers.

‘Either hammer or the anvil be’—more and more workers understand that this is the issue.

How else to explain the attempts to split the busmen by the 8s. 6d. award *for some*? or Sir John Elliot’s bombastic threat to take 500 buses off the road in October, reduce busmen’s earnings by nearly £2 million, cram every bus to the roof? How else to explain the wharfingers’ insistence that the dock strike could only be resolved either by permitting them to use blackleg labour (‘non-registered workers’) or alternatively that dockers themselves should *as a matter of course* blackleg—a request to the dockers to deliver themselves up, gagged, bound, ready for the slaughter? How else explain the meat market employers’ first arrogant offer to negotiate a settlement based, not on wage increases, but on redundancy and working conditions, *i.e.*, speed up and reduced earnings.

All this is a warning to the whole working class. For all employers will be influenced by the outcome of these struggles. The Tory Government, on behalf of the dominant groups of the capitalist class, has made clear (through the Cohen Report and elsewhere) that its aim is not restricted to ‘wage restraint’.

The immediate step is to impose on the trade union movement a wage freeze while the cost of living continues to rise. At the same time intensified measures are being taken to increase unemployment. The intention is to weaken the trade unions while their funds are bled by strike action. The calculation is that these first steps will open the way to the achievement of the main aim of the offensive, the drastic reduction in the real wages of all workers. So, in this first round of big industrial battles, to prevent the united action of the trade unions is vital for the development of this employers’ offensive.

The acceptance of the 3 per cent. railway award by the union executives was an acceptance of capitalist strategy. The 3 per cent. is to be paid for by redundancy or by intensification of work. Two-thirds of it has already been wiped out as shown by Cost-of-Living index increases. But the most serious element was its acceptance at a moment when an alliance of railwaymen, busmen and road haulage men could have won something far better and

delivered a death blow to the use of the Cohen Report. It left the busmen to fight alone. No wonder Alderman Baker of the Central Bus Committee said in Trafalgar Square on June 1 :

We do not believe in, or want, 3 per cent. Trade Unionism.

With the main line railwaymen out of the battle the next step for the Government was to prevent solidarity action with the busmen. Three per cent. was given to the underground men, plus 'economies' and the job of dealing with half a million extra passengers. Pressure was developed to prevent oil and power workers from being brought in.

First the velvet glove. Discussions with the Minister; with the Prime Minister; with the Ministry of Labour; 'chinks of light'; 'hopes of settlement'; anything to keep discussion going—as long as it prevented action. 'Better jaw-jaw than open class war' as long as 'jaw-jaw' meant no new offer. The *Star*, London's evening Voice of Liberalism, on June 4 had as its main headline, 'Bus strike draws to an end' and in the stop press 'Bus talks break down'.

But the velvet glove alone was insufficient. So first sight of the mailed fist—threats to put the troops in if the oil workers came out, threats of what it would mean to 'challenge the Government and the Constitution'. As if the Government were not challenging the workers! Who dictated the railway settlement? Whose guidance does the British Transport Commission and London Transport Executive take?

Working Class Forces in the Strikes

How stands the million and a quarter strong Transport and General Workers' Union? It recognised the bus strike and twice raised strike pay, but left the other London strikes unrecognised (June 11). Its national leaders took a firm stand against the splitting Foster award, yet had to be brought back by the decision of the men's lay representatives to the demand of 10s. 6d. for all.

It encouraged democratically elected strike committees at garage level, without bans on Communists; but concentrated in the hands of national officials the plenary powers which on previous occasions have been given to the Central Bus Conference. It has failed to conduct adequate publicity for the strikers' demands: it has not even issued an adequate central strike bulletin to its own members.

The exceptional unity and solidarity in the strike has not been accompanied by full use of the strength of the T. & G.W.U. in developing the solidarity movement. Official action against the

rejection of the petrol workers' wage claim has not been taken, the members in power stations not called out, the provincial busmen not brought into line. Decisions on control of petrol supplies to coach firms have been inadequately operated. The T. & G.W.U.'s large number of delegates on Trades Councils and Labour Parties have not been fully mobilised to press for support.

While, under Frank Cousins' General Secretaryship and with progressive and militant forces in the national leadership and the Strike Committees, a fight has been developed against Tory policy that must be making Bevin and Deakin turn in their graves, the legacy of Bevin and Deakin remains.

The Scarborough ban of 1949, which excluded Communists from holding official positions in the union, the undemocratic method of appointment of full-time officials, the outlook inculcated in many of the officials, have all contributed towards indecision when decision was essential, to conflicting pressures when unity to win was essential, to damping down the desire of the dockers and oil and power workers for solidarity action when rousing and leading that fighting spirit was essential.

They did not have their heart in victory for the strikers of 1958, those who kow-towed to Deakin when he wrote in July, 1949:

Unofficial action has never achieved any worth-while objective and never will. The first requisite of every unofficial dispute is resumption of normal work. We must take active practical and immediate steps to deal with the menace in our midst. Those who are responsible for this type of action must be brought to book.

Thus the Transport and General Workers' Union has become a battleground of conflicting pressures. All honour to those at every level in the union fighting for 100 per cent. trade unionism and not 3 per cent. trade unionism. But the final resolving of that battle will depend on the rank and file, their active support for every progressive trend, their fight to extend union democracy including the removal of the bans.

And the T.U.C.? Surely only the determination of the strikers and the solidarity movement will prevent the decision of the General Council on June 4 advising the T. & G.W.U. not to extend the bus dispute, going down in trade union history as 'Black Wednesday'. How does that decision square with the resolution of the 1957 Blackpool Trades Union Congress which declared:

... and reaffirms the determination of the Trade Union movement while prices and profits remain uncontrolled to take such steps industrially as will ensure that wages keep pace with rising costs.

It was in defiance of the Rules and Standing Orders of the T.U.C. which declare in Rule 8 (d) on the duties of the General Council :

They shall promote common action by the Trade Union movement on general questions such as wages and hours of labour that may arise . . . between employers and trade unions, or between the trade union movement and the Government and shall have the power to assist any union which is attacked on any vital question of trade union principle.

Instead of promoting common action, the General Council impeded it. Instead of assisting 'any union' it did the T. & G.W.U. great injury. Its action was a blow at those courageous workers on the Underground striving to save the honour of the railway unions. Such is the price of the anti-Communism and block vote 'deals' which have kept trade union leaders such as Arthur Horner, Jim Gardner, Frank Haxell, Abe Moffat off the General Council.

What a contrast to such conduct has been the splendid support by workers in every industry and union, including many executives; the statement of the General Secretary of the Electrical Trades Union that the union was prepared to respond financially and *industrially* to any request from the T. & G.W.U., the similar decisions of the Conference of the Enginemmen and Firemen and the East London Oil Workers, and the solidarity stand of the Dockers.

That such a response was forthcoming was due not least to the magnificent job done by the *Daily Worker*, by branches and members of the Communist Party in hundreds of factories and localities.

These strikes show how urgent is the need of the trade union movement for a policy of trade union unity of action, for immediate initiative by the executives and confederations to establish such unity and for a General Council that will act in the interests of the trade union movement.

The bus strike brings to the fore once again the issue of nationalisation. Had such a strike taken place in 1928 the shareholders of the old London General Omnibus Company would have suffered such heavy losses that they would have preferred to pay the increase. But in 1958 the stockholders of London Transport, their interest payments guaranteed by the state, will not lose a penny from the dispute. The metamorphosis of nationalisation from public ownership in the interests of the working people to state monopoly capitalist ownership in the interests of monopoly has been completed. Yet the Tories have been able to do this only because the 1947 Transport Act passed under a Labour Government contained the seeds of that transformation.

Nevertheless, even with its weaknesses, the Tories and the L.T.E. flout the 1947 Act which stated the *duty* of the Commission:

to take such steps as they consider necessary for *extending and improving the Transport and Port facilities within Great Britain as to provide most effectively and conveniently for the needs of the public.* (Our emphasis.)

Five hundred buses off the road? Pack yourselves underground? Cuts in rail services? Wait longer, queue more, pay more? . . . All apparently so as to 'extend and improve the Transport facilities'.

What is needed is the united effort of the trade unions, the travelling public and Labour in Parliament to change certain provisions of the 1947 Act so that the financial burden of compensation and interest charges is removed from nationalised transport, and its controlling bodies are staffed by individuals in whom the public can have confidence.

At time of writing the issues of the struggle are still unresolved but certain lessons for the future are clear. The use by the Tory Government and the capitalist class of all resources at their command to divide the workers makes united trade union action essential. All policies or efforts, whether from outside or from within, to let each section go forth to fight alone must be combated and defeated.

This struggle for trade union unity has to come from below and from above, by the organised mass pressure from the workshops, branches and districts and by appropriate measures from the trade union executives. And when unity is won, then, as has been said, 'that united movement needs to be inspired with the Socialist outlook and the determination to carry through a fundamental social change'.

In this conception lies the final defeat of the strategy of the employers and the Tory Government. The London strike battles of May-June, 1958, represent the first round in the new and ever-widening stage of the struggle against capitalism.

BRITAIN AND THE COLONIES. Don't miss the important announcement (page 314) of the Discussion Conference.

THE DOCTORS' DILEMMA

Ruscoe Clarke

TEN years ago the National Health Service was established amid high hopes for the future: today it is facing difficulties and frustrations which must be resolved if those hopes are to be realised.*

In spite of the serious neglect of hospital building (which prompted a recent President of the Royal College of Surgeons to remark that we were doing 20th century medicine in 18th century buildings), the average standard of hospital care has improved over the past ten years. This is chiefly due to staff increases and improved facilities for diagnosis and treatment. But the serious restrictions placed on capital development have resulted in a failure to solve the chronic shortage of hospital accommodation in particular for the elderly, the chronic sick and those in need of mental treatment. Long waiting-lists for admission to hospital and queues or long waiting times for specialist consultation remain ever-present problems. The failure of the government to allow local authorities to provide proper and sufficient accommodation for old people further increases the strain on hospital facilities and results in the continued tragedy of thousands of old folk bandied about between one authority and another in their efforts to find somewhere to spend the last years of their lives.

General practice suffered a serious setback in the first years after the establishment of the service. Denied the nation-wide network of health centres envisaged under the Act, practitioners were faced with a sudden enormous increase in their work without commensurate facilities for doing it, and with a system of payment by capitation which encouraged large lists of patients rather than efficient medical practice. This combination of events acted in favour of the more mercenary doctor and against his more conscientious colleague. Thanks largely to medically keen general practitioners we are now witnessing a considerable revival and improvement in the level of general practice by the development of partnership and group practice arrangements. Unfortunately, most of the few health centres which exist have been set up with working

*A useful official survey of the National Health Service is provided by the *Guillebaud Report*. H.M. Stationery Office, Cmd. 9663 (price 9s.).

arrangements which tend to compromise the idea of health centre practice amongst patients and doctors alike.

At the root of the basic defects of the Health Service (both hospital and general practice) lies the government policy of restricting social service expenditure in the interests of the arms race. Government spokesmen have tried every device to justify their piecemeal attacks on the N.H.S. Unfortunately for them their 'explanations' have not been supported by facts—even from their own inquiries. The Guillebaud Committee which was established to provide justification for limiting health service expenditure, reported that far from finding evidence of extravagance, it considered that a great deal more money was needed to provide an adequate service. The Royal Commission on Mental Health provided no comfort to the Treasury and disclosed some aspects of the gross neglect of accommodation for the mentally sick. *The Guillebaud Report* stated: Expressed as a proportion of total national resources (the 'gross national product') the current net cost of the Service fell from $3\frac{3}{4}\%$ in 1949/50 to $3\frac{1}{4}\%$ in 1953/54.*

It is common knowledge amongst those working in the service that capital and maintenance expenditure for hospitals is at a level so low that it would not be tolerated by any major industrial enterprise. The resultant inefficiency leads not only to hardship for patients and staff but to a wasteful increase in overhead expenditure, e.g., in fuel, a very heavy item on any hospital budget. Even minor extensions and improvements are only obtained after endless delays and frustrations. The budget ceiling imposed by the Treasury means that every small wage increase for one section of personnel is a barrier to an increase, however justified, to another section and that any wage increase at all means less money for development and modernisation within the service. The limits placed on the N.H.S. budget leads to a level of wages which cannot compete with that offered for equivalent work in industry and is responsible for the chronic shortage of staff, both skilled and unskilled, in the hospital service.

It is undoubtedly true that the 10 years of the health service have constituted an advance so that everyone—or nearly everyone—can get full medical care when sick. Although it has not developed the attitude to preventive medicine and positive health which has always been advocated by socialists, it has provided almost a complete medical treatment service for the whole population. Its

*Cmd. 9663, page 46.

initiation unveiled the extent of medical needs that were previously hidden by inability to pay. This is true not only for the elderly and the children and dependents of insured men, but also for the economic-geographical basis which determined the distribution of doctors: between 1951 and 1956, for instance, the number of people living in 'under-doctored' areas fell from $21\frac{1}{2}$ to $9\frac{1}{2}$ millions. Yet there is now a growing dissatisfaction with the service. This is seen less perhaps amongst patients (for the working-class stubbornly supports the service in spite of its weaknesses and Tory propaganda against it)—than amongst personnel within the service, particularly the medical profession and its auxiliaries. The extent of unrest amongst doctors made it possible for the British Medical Association to propose a form of strike action which, although it was intended to force the Government to meet the doctors' demands, rapidly threatened the very existence of the service itself. Despite the attempts by a section of right-wing extremists, the doctors as a whole refused to be led into an all-out attack on the service and despite their many just grievances, forced the B.M.A. leaders to agree to put the case to a Royal Commission.

What is the cause of the low morale in the medical profession today; the widespread frustration, irritation and cynicism? They arise from two outstanding sources of grievance, the relentless contraction of the doctors' standard of living through inflation and rising prices and the wide-spread financial restrictions on the running and development of the service.

Is it any wonder that doctors are listening more attentively to the arguments of the reactionary 'Fellowship for Freedom in Medicine', an organisation which is openly opposed to the National Health Service? They begin to blame 'the state', 'socialism', the trade unions! If no effective lead is given the situation is ripe for wider attacks on the whole principle of a national health service, its being 'free at the time of need'; for increased charges for medical care; for new methods of payment based on restricted insurance and a means test; for more private money-making hospitals and clinics so that medicine can become big business and pay higher salaries for work under better conditions—for patients who can pay!

All this has been happening against a background of the early stages of a scientific renaissance in medicine, stimulated to a considerable extent by dramatic developments in other fields of science. There are many conditions for which the doctor could

do little or nothing twenty years ago which today are amenable to accurate diagnosis and rational therapy. We have new drugs, new operations and in particular new methods of investigation of the early and curable stages of conditions of sickness. But their use needs training, facilities and *time*: time to get to know individual patients as well as to carry out investigations and treatment, time to think, to read, to study, to discuss. The advances need *more* doctors, not less as the Willink Committee proposes, more skilled assistance, more room, more equipment—more than ever before, if the people of Britain are to get anything like the benefit that the development of medical science could bring.

It is therefore tragic that in this age of exciting progress more and more doctors, young and old alike, are becoming cynical and disillusioned. Specialists have too many patients, too much routine, no time and few incentives. General practitioners complain that their job has been down-graded to that of a sorting clerk. Their assistants complain that they cannot get established in practice.

Hospital doctors—sometimes physicians and surgeons with ten to twelve years' training behind them—know that there is only about a one in four chance of them being able to practice in the job for which they have been trained! Students are advised not to take up medicine. Young doctors are discouraged by their seniors from pursuing careers in the major specialities. The situation augurs ill for the future. Today we have trained experts who will not get jobs, tomorrow we shall have no-one to fill the jobs when they become available. The future of British medicine is at stake.

The general practitioners have just claims, the hospital doctors just grievances. The answer lies not in dismantling the service but in developing its efficiency and humanity. Most doctors welcome every such development but they want personal incentives based on good work and the chance of an established position by the age of 35! Other workers in the service want better conditions and salaries at least comparable to those they could get in industry. Instead they are threatened with the total breakdown of all negotiations even through the discredited and cumbersome Whitley machinery. What can be done?

The immediate needs are obvious enough. There must be a general increase in wages and salaries at all levels in the service; an adequate start must be made to build health centres, first in heavily populated industrial areas, in which general practitioners

can provide an up-to-date service by working in groups with adequate assistance and diagnostic facilities; a halt must be called (by large-scale capital development) to the degeneration of the physical conditions in which hospital medicine is practised.

There is little disagreement in principle on the demands, but action to achieve them is held back by divisions within the labour movement and by the failure to unite the strength of the movement to the demands of the medical profession.

The trade union movement has a fundamental responsibility in this field, and can seek advice from its affiliated organisations in the health services. The Socialist Medical Association played a great part in inspiring the demand for a National Health Service, and has continued to act as a watchdog in defence of basic principles whenever they have been threatened. In recent years it has sometimes appeared to be concerned more with abstract principles than with the solution of immediate problems of the service, particularly those affecting the medical profession. Because fundamentally the interests of the majority of the doctors are not at variance with those of their patients, the Socialist Medical Association will no doubt regain its unique and invaluable role in the field of health.

The majority of doctors are concerned to practice medicine properly, with financial incentives to do better work. At this particular moment their actions can be even more decisive with respect to the future of British medicine and the health service than the determined stand of the clerical and administrative workers. If the doctors' interests and contribution are ignored much of the effort of the trade union movement may be wasted. An alliance between the doctors and the organised representatives of their patients, can do much to stop the rot. Unity is essential and can come from mutual understanding; the first need is for full discussion, which this article is intended to provoke.

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GERMANS AGAINST ATOMIC DEATH

Otto Baumann*

ON the evening of March 22 last, Dr. Adenauer in a private conversation expressed his conviction, gained in the course of the debate in the Federal Parliament, that it would have been better to have foregone this trial of forces. This statement was not only an acknowledgement of the patent fact of his defeat in the parliamentary battle of words. It was precisely the pursuit by the government parties' majority—despite all opposition arguments—of a rigid 'policy of strength' to the point of deciding on atomic armament for the Federal Republic that fanned the indignation of the working class and of the overwhelming majority of the West German population into stormy manifestations of extra-parliamentary resistance.

The argument around West Germany's atomic armament has had as a consequence that for the first time since the Federal Republic's foundation, the existing unbridgeable antagonism was openly displayed. It is the antagonism between the mass of the people striving for peace and security and the adventurous policy of war preparations being followed by the ruling group of West German monopoly-capitalists and their political trustees, the Adenauer group. In this powerful popular movement against atomic death, against the atomic armament of Western Germany and for the adhesion of the Federal Republic to an atom-free zone the various classes and strata are taking sides in accordance with their real interests.

From the working class, beyond the ranks of the intellectuals, right into the bourgeoisie, the people are consciously forming a front against the small group of those in power: a group not hesitating to add to their guilt for two world wars the crime of atom murder in order to carry out their plans of revenge. When the Adenauer party, after an election conducted with an almost unparalleled demagoguery, managed to obtain a majority in the Federal Parliament in September, 1957, it believed it had overcome the difficulties of the past months arising from the warnings—particularly those of the 18 nuclear physicists—against the dangers of atomic armament. Already at that time the German Communist Party had correctly pointed out that the disappointment of the masses, and not least of the Christian Democratic union electors themselves, would

*Member of the Executive Committee of the German Communist Party.

be all the greater when they were suddenly compelled to recognise that with their vote for the Adenauer party they had not chosen 'security' as they were promised and as they had believed. By electing Adenauer, millions of people wanted to express a vote 'against experiments'. Now that very same Adenauer had brought them the deadly experiment of the atomic armaments race with all its political and social consequences; increased political tensions; the perpetuation of a divided Germany, with new heavy burdens on the people through price increases and pressure on wages. Thus a change in mood came about.

In the first stages the movement against atomic armament was characterised by a particularly strong initiative on the part of intellectuals and scientific and cultural circles. Already when the first parliamentary debate was held in January last the M.P.s had been presented with a petition against atomic armament bearing thousands of signatures from well-known personalities in religious and cultural circles. By the time of the second debate in March their growing activity had led to united and organised protest action by the professors and students of important universities such as Heidelberg; by the majority of Hamburg's medical profession; by the confessional church under the leadership of Pastor Niemoller.

The temporary lag in activity by the working class at first aroused the hopes of Adenauer and Strauss that they could master the movement. They anticipated being able to confuse the masses anew with a flood of anti-soviet propaganda to such a degree that they would follow them on the path of chauvinism and revenge and would at least not place obstacles in the way of preparations for an atomic war. With this intention they developed more openly than previously their plan for creating a new order in Europe, a plan always pursued by the German imperialists and militarists: the programme of aggression abroad and of threats and fascist methods of force at home. But it was just this brutality, above all that displayed by Strauss, Jaeger and other leading Christian Democratic Union speakers, which had the effect of a call to action both inside and outside parliament. After Strauss's speeches the Adenauer supporters' professions of peace had become so palpably false that the Chairman of the Free Democratic Party cried out that he would not even place a shot-gun in this man's hands: a man speaking in this manner also wanted to shoot. Social Democrats recalled to memory the development beginning with the law giving dictatorial powers to Hitler in 1933, continuing with Goebbels' hysterical call for total war and leading to the catastrophe

of 1945. The First Secretary of the Central Committee of the German Communist Party, Max Reimann, declared that the State of Emergency created by the Adenauer government demanded national resistance. This conception was repeated within a few days as the common viewpoint of all enemies of the atom bomb policy in the declarations of the Social Democratic and Free Democratic parties.

A few days later the chairman of the Social Democratic party and West German Confederation of Trade Unions, together with well-known political and religious personalities, held the first large meeting of the movement 'Fight Atomic Death'. In Frankfurt about a hundred representatives of various groups of political and religious views formed an 'Action Committee Against Atomic Armament' and appealed for the formation of local committees in all parts of the Federal Republic.

Simultaneously—and this is decisive—the working class had begun to transform this movement by mighty demonstrations into a powerful movement and to raise it to a new higher level of political mass struggle. In Kassell workers at Henschel's factory even downed tools during the Federal Parliament debate and organised a militant demonstration through the streets of their town, so terribly damaged during the war. Their example was followed by the workers of Buessing Automobile Factory in Braunschweig and of the Volkswagen factory, as well as by the dockers of Hamburg. The workers' demand for a referendum and for extra-parliamentary decision, for meetings, demonstrations and the downing of tools became ever more insistent. In this the trade unionists made it quite clear they were determined to go as far as political mass strikes and, if necessary, even to a general strike.

In this situation the appeal, first by forty-four and then by a further twenty-five, of the Federal Republic's best-known university professors to the trade unions to utilise their strength, was of great importance for developing the consciousness of the working class that they would be serving the whole people if they were to employ trade union methods of struggle. Among those signing this appeal were such outstanding scientists as the atomic physicist Professor Max Born.

The Adenauer group reacted with furious threats to identical declarations from Social Democrats, Communists and trade unionists, which characterised political mass strikes as a legal and

democratic method of struggle and demanded a referendum as the people's elementary right to make their own decision on matters of life and death. By this reaction the group of atom bomb politicians only exposed the weakness of their position and their intention of accelerating the re-establishment of fascism. The right of the worker to strike not only for political but also for economic demands was attacked in a typically Nazi fashion. One of the closest collaborators of the Minister of the Interior, Schroeder, described a dictatorship of the Chancellor as altogether possible and a necessary manifestation of Bonn's democracy.

Against Communists such as former Communist M.P. Walter Fisch the bloodstained judges of Hitler justice are being set loose. In North-Rhine, Westphalia and Bavaria mass trials involving more than twenty defendants are being staged in order to take revenge on courageous fighters for peace and democracy and to intimidate the people. On the pretence of a 'National Emergency', Social Democratic majorities in provincial parliaments and local councils are being threatened with proceedings by the constitutional court and bringing in of government controllers to prevent decisions upholding the legality of referenda, and carrying them out. Against the supporters of a referendum the Adenauer press and Bonn ministerial bureaucracy are levelling exactly the same infamous charges of alleged 'hostility to the Constitution' and 'endangering the State' with which two years ago the unconstitutional ban on the Communist Party was justified. These supporters of a referendum include politicians of the working class parties and well-known constitutional law experts.

But today everybody recognises that it is the policy of atom bomb which threatens the country and people, freedom and life. Today, opposed to Adenauer's threats stand the overwhelming majority of the people, all parties and organisations of the working class and a movement of the people. Together they are undoubtedly strong enough to secure the right to a referendum and the freedom to decide against atomic death. This was impressively shown in Hamburg when the Social Democratic Lord Mayor read a letter to the gathering against atomic death in which Adenauer calumniated the decision of the Hamburg Senate for a referendum as a 'breach of the constitution' and threatened to use force. When the speaker asked the crowd to answer this provocation, banners demanding strike action against atomic armament, a referendum and a decision for an atom-free zone were raised; and 150,000 reiterated

to a man their resolve to oppose the policy of Adenauer until peace had conquered atomic death.

This pressure of the masses from below ties up at present with the development of local committees against atomic armament in which all active forces of resistance must unite to give a firm leadership to the movement. This is all the more necessary to combat the terror of the Adenauer government and to counter certain signs of retreat on the part of leading representatives of the Social Democratic Party and the West German Confederation of Trade Unions. These circles have a tendency to yield to the pressure of those in power and to avoid a further sharpening of the struggle. This vacillation has already created great discontent in the wage struggle of the workers in the Iron and Steel producing industry of the Rhine and Ruhr. It is meeting at present all the more resistance as the mass of the people are increasingly recognising that at the Foreign Ministers' Conference of the NATO Conference in Copenhagen and, in particular, in secret political and military agreements with the representatives of American imperialism, Adenauer, Strauss and Brentano are striving to make atomic armament in Western Germany an established fact. By doing this they want from the outset also to place as many obstacles as possible in the way of efforts of the Soviet Union and other forces of peace for a successful Summit Conference.

In this way, the national life interests of the German people and of the international need to secure peace coincide, if the popular movement in Western Germany, led by the working class, adopts today the realistic aims of answering the war deeds of the Adenauer government with resolute deeds of peace, of banning atomic death and of bringing about a change in Western Germany's policy. In foreign policy this change would have to consist in the following: that the Federal government uses the occasion of the Soviet Union having ceased atomic weapon tests to urge a similar step by the United States and Great Britain; that it rejects atomic armament of its own armed forces as well as the stationing of foreign atomic weapons on West German soil; and that the Federal Republic throws its political and economic weight on the side of peaceful development by joining an atom-free zone in Central Europe.

After all the misery that German imperialism and militarism has brought to the people of Europe and to the German people themselves, such a change would at last justify the hope that our country was no longer an object of concern and hate, but a respected member of the family of peace-loving peoples.

BOOK

Edwardian Portraits

W. S. Adams.

Secker & Warburg. 228pp. 25s.

Edwardian Portraits, by the author of *Edwardian Heritage*, is made up of essays finished shortly before his death. They were prepared for publication by his wife. The portraits are of individuals. Together, they are a portrait of an age. As the author shows in the first part of the book, the Edwardian Age is not bounded by the accession and death of a king. Its beginning is Britain's loss of her world-trade monopoly in 1870-1880; its end is the 1914 war and the Russian Revolution.

The first portrait is that of Edward VII, who by skilful adaptation to a new age, helped to prevent a revolution in Britain. He 'democratised' the monarchy: he invited working-class leaders to royal residences, 'charming away belligerency with a smile and a cigar'. He charmed so well that on his death *Reynolds News* wrote that the people, 'no longer trampled serf-like underfoot by hereditary despotism', had now become 'managing directors in the great Imperial syndicate'. W. S. Adams draws a scathing portrait of one of the syndicate's real directors—Lord Leverhulme. His professed aim was 'to Socialise and Christianise business relations', and Gladstone declared that in Port Sunlight the cash nexus was abolished. But Lord Leverhulme controlled £56 million

capital; and 60,000 white people and 25,000 Africans worked for him. Baden-Powell, who an aptly chosen illustration shows against a background of madonna lilies, helped such exploitation: 'Don't think of yourself,' he told his scouts, 'but think of your country and your employers.'

Opposing these imperialists are two heroes of freedom: W. S. Blunt and E. D. Morel. While the portraits of Edward VII, Leverhulme and Baden-Powell are etched with irony and wit, and with understanding of the exceptional powers which imperialism perverted, into the portraits of Blunt and Morel has gone the author's passionate devotion to the cause for which they fought. Most moving is the story of how Morel set himself to discover the truth about the Congo, and having found how country and people were being bled by the Belgian King Leopold, never rested until some measure of justice was done. Then he gave all his remaining strength to the fight against imperialist war and for the establishment of friendly relations with the new-born Soviet Union.

The book opens with the author's memories of childhood in an Edwardian middle-class family, entitled 'As a Boy Saw It'. The grown man strove to change it; and his noble spirit lives in these pages.

ALICK WEST.

(Continued from page ii of cover)

whole people forward to socialism out of the waste, degradation and dangers of this Tory-dominated capitalist society. To help unite those who labour—miners, engineers, transport workers, doctors, teachers, as well as the womenfolk who have to make homes despite all difficulties: that is where the 'LABOUR' of our title comes from. Plans in Spring, 1921, were worked out in consultation with engineering shop stewards and miners, who in those days bore the brunt of every class battle. Readers only numbered a few hundred then. But almost at once there came a demand, not only from the most class-conscious workers in Britain, but also from workers in other lands. Next month we will consider why.

Yes, L.M. is the place to find the history of past struggles, without distortions and 'interpretations' fashionable amongst lecturers who are so 'impartial' and 'uncommitted' that they wouldn't acknowledge their own mother in public. But it is impossible to separate L.M.'s history from that of the industrial workers and their struggles. And all today's history is being reflected and recorded in L.M.—labour's history, and the actions of the men and women

who are making it. The question is, how much *more quickly* history could be if L.M. reached more people, especially amongst the younger trade unionists. We want his and her criticisms and suggestions; any ideas for reaching others? For example: a Middlesex reader writes: 'I can just imagine Palme Dutt's masterly June Notes "Strike Strategy" going down in a big way in the bus garages, if put up as a poster, say 36 in. x 20 in. Couldn't that be a good seller for display at trade union branches, workshops, factories, in friendly windows—and build readership? Or would it cost too much?' Yes; it would cost too much. But—there is nothing to stop readers pasting up the pages from two copies as a wall newspaper in club rooms—who will try it out?

The fund is dangerously low. This hampers our work severely and puts the printing of pamphlets and posters quite out of reach. It is bad enough now, *before* the holiday season, with the pinch of unemployment and the call of strike funds. So our very special thanks to 'L'Humanité' who sends 'a double dose, for as I am going on holiday I shan't miss a few extra shillings!' Donations totalled:

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